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MISSIONS IN AND AROUND TUCSON

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4

Missions

IN AND AROUND

TUCSON



by
Prentice Duell

M I S S I O N S
I N A N D A R O U N D
T U C S O N

By
PRENTICE DUELL, A.M.
Author of "Mission Architecture"

Illustrations by
J. E. VALENTINE

Published and Distributed by the
TUCSON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
TUCSON, ARIZONA

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*To the
SPANISH PADRES,
who first labored in this
western country, little
dreaming that they were
laying the foundation
for the great common-
wealth which we know
today, this booklet is
dedicated. : : : :*

mission

~~School / Assemblies~~
~~Studios~~
~~(Calif.)~~

San Xavier

Indian School

before restoration,

probably, about 1880

Frederic D. Dwell





The Coming of the Padres



o--o--o

ABOUT two centuries ago, a small group of Spanish padres came tramping across the great western desert from Mexico, fired with religious zeal and bent upon Christianizing the Indians.

Besides, they were to take possession of the country for the Spanish Crown and to teach the Indian to realize his position as a subject of the King. As they progressed on their way they built a "chain" of mission-churches for the Indians, leaving each time several of their number behind to continue the religious teaching. The system was an ideal one from the standpoint of the Church, but when the Crown later withdrew its support, the missions had to be abandoned.

It is these churches which have come down to us to-day as ruins, by which we can best form some conception of the immensity of the undertaking. Though built to satisfy a need and in a country few white men cared to see, every effort was put forth to make them beautiful; and, like the great cathedrals of Europe, soaring Heavenward above the little villages at their base, the mission rose above the Indian village and dominated the life of the community.

However, the life which the padre had chosen was, at best, trying and often precarious. He had to tramp many miles over the burning sands, visiting from two to three missions under his guidance. The Indian was indolent and thought more of the bit of chocolate he was likely to receive from the padre than what the padre had to say. After attending the white-man's church he would go and worship his idols in secret according to his own fashion. Uprisings were frequent, but never did the padre flee from his charge. In the face of disaster he remained and did what he could; when death was at hand he made no resistance.

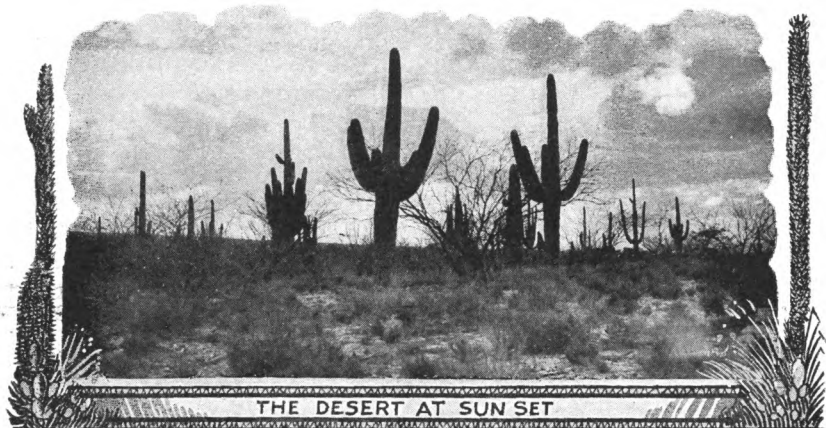
An old volume bound with parchment, a sunken bell, a musty robe or a faded fresco, recall the mission days—days of hardship and privation with touches here and there of brightness, the coming of a new padre, the arrival of an extra supply of provisions, or less indifference on the part of the Indian.

Was it all worth while, this great sacrifice; the leaving of proud Spain for the conquest of souls in a desert land?

It was not this earth's glory, however, that the padre was seeking—it was that which lay beyond. His whole life was one of sacrifice, sharing with the Indian his last morsel of grain cake, now with a word of commendation, now with a word of gentle reproach, but ever with a feeling of kindness.

He has long passed on his way to that great beyond and only the ruins of his work mark his path. But his spirit remains and imbues those padres of today who carry on the work. There are mission fields in foreign lands where hardships and privation are known, but in the mission fields of the Southwest there is peace. The Indian attends the great, white church built for him by the long robe—he attends of his own free will.

Yes, the dream of the padre which led him to give his life to a cause and die unknown has been realized. His work was not in vain.



THE DESERT AT SUN SET

San Xavier del Bac



SHRINE OF SAN XAVIER DEL BAC

SINCE the dawn of history, man has, from time to time, raised structures which have endured through the ages and come down to us as monuments, marking great epochs in his gradual rise toward civilization. The artistic things which man has created are the true and unconscious expression of his culture at that time.

The great buildings of the world have been, almost without exception, temples and churches; for men were fired with intense enthusiasm and religious zeal in those instances and such a driving force and inspiration must be present to create any great work of art.

Though these monuments are few in number and for the most part, confined to the continent of Europe, one would hardly believe that one of them—a great church—is on the American continent, in the desert of Arizona. It is the Mission San Xavier del Bac.

There are many missions in the Southwest and some of them hold a high place architecturally. The padres did their best to emulate and perpetuate the beauty of their Spanish cathedrals in this new land. But the materials were different, the Indian was a serious factor to consider, and above all, the padre was sorely hampered by a paucity of funds. While attempting the impossible he unconsciously created something new—Mission Architecture. It is the only serious architecture really created on this continent.

Contrary to the general rule that churches should face east, we find San Xavier facing directly south. Undoubtedly, this was because the supply trains and whatever visitors the mission might have had, had to come from the

south, or, in other words, Mexico. For similar reason, nearly all of Arizona's missions faced in this direction.

Standing on a slightly elevated position, San Xavier is easily seen from all parts of the valley. The padres had few roads to follow and the mission had to direct the way as well as call the Indian.

When viewed across the desert, one is impressed by the beauty and symmetry of the ensemble. Two plain towers are on either side of a highly ornate, gabled entrance and above the broken arch of the gable, the noble dome may be seen between the towers. The windows and doors are symmetrically placed and thrown wholly in shadow by the thickness of the walls. Their blackness, contrasted with the glistening whiteness of the walls and the reddish ornamentation about the entrance, make a picture against the cloudless sky and endless desert not to be forgotten.

In front of the church itself is the walled atrium in which the Indians were gathered together for meetings not directly connected with the religious service. Originally it was paved with flag stones, which gradually broke away during the abandonment, leaving the exposed ground. Strange to say, the atrium soon became literally a burying ground, the Indian reasoning that the nearer to the church he rested, the better chance he would have for Paradise. Above the doorway rises the ornamental gable, the one spot of display on the whole structure. It was untouched at the time of restoration, its soft red tone still showing some traces of the original colored decoration.

Upon entering from the bright sunlight outside into the cold, bluish twilight of the great vault, it is some moments before ones eyes can follow the form of the walls. The air is laden with the incense of years and a narrow ray of light, coming diagonally from one of the Moorish windows beneath the dome, casts a phosphoric gleam on the altar.

When one has become accustomed to the light, a mass of color grows evident, the remains of a decoration

that was once brilliant in the extreme. To eastern eyes, the colors, though faded, still appear gaudy and bizarre. Of course, this holds true with many of the paintings done in a sunny land by a native people. The East is a land of grays and subtle tones, and the inhabitant develops, perhaps, a finer sense of color values than his western brother, who lives in a land of intense color. Coloring is all about him and the very mountains seem to radiate color. Anyone who has been fortunate enough to witness a mirage or even a sunset on the "Painted Desert" can appreciate this fact.



The frescoes possess real merit. They were done, tradition says, by an artistic monk of the college of Queretaro, who was a pupil of Francisco Eduardo de Tresfuerras, the "Michael Angelo of Mexico." The subjects are treated in a conventional manner and show the artist to have been well acquainted with many of the great European masterpieces. The smaller decorations were done by the assistants and have a primitive appearance that is not altogether distasteful. The drawing on the whole resembles that of Fra Angelico but the coloring has the finesse of a Botticelli.

Behind the mere ornamentation lies a significant meaning. Everything seems to be symbolic; the symbols alone in connection with San Xavier would justify some intensive study. The shell plays an important part, signifying pilgrimage, and, sometimes baptism. Over the apse is a huge shell springing from the top of the altar and, also, above the front entrance is a shell. On the main altar appear stalks of wheat and clusters of grapes, signifying the body and blood of Christ.

As a whole, the church is constructed of burned brick even to the upper floors and roof, including the dome. The absence of wood is surprising. Only the doors with their frames and the spindles before the windows, along with the three front balconies and some interior details may claim to have been a part of an almost fabulous forest which once stood round about.

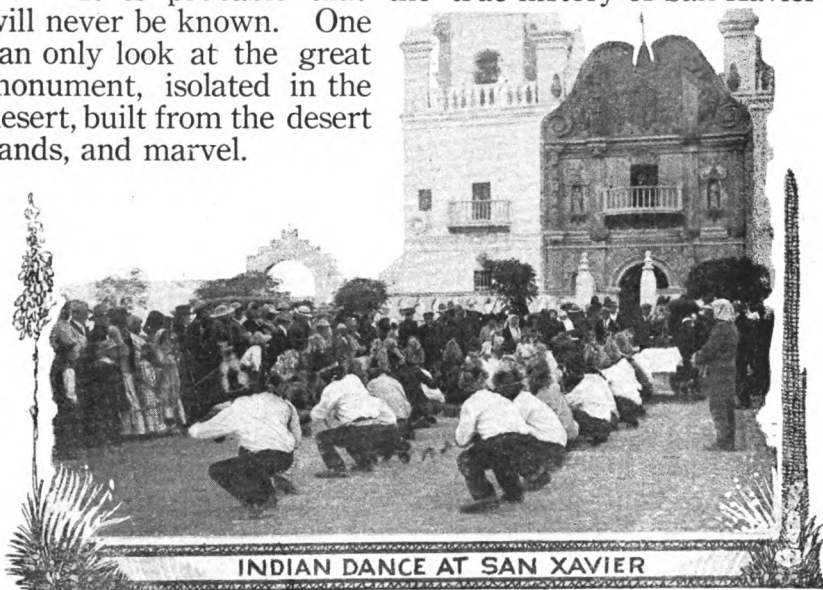
The walls are solid masonry and are on an average six feet thick. This almost excessive thickness does not imply that the padres knew nothing of construction or the strength of materials. There is another reason for thick walls besides merely keeping out the heat. In such walls both windows and doors have deep recesses. As the rays of the sun beat down and through these openings, the direct ray always falls on the side of the recess and only its refraction enters the room. Practically the same amount of light minus the heat is obtained in this way. The construction throughout the mission is very commendable and the brick work deserves the highest praise.

There are few tangible dates connected with the history of San Xavier, but we know from the personal diary of Father Kino, that venerable old priest who was the har-binger of this great conquest of souls, that he founded such a mission at Bac in 1692. Bac was the name of the Indian village comprising some two thousand inhabitants and was the location of a prehistoric Indian city which must have flourished contemporaneously with the great "lost" city of Casa Grande.

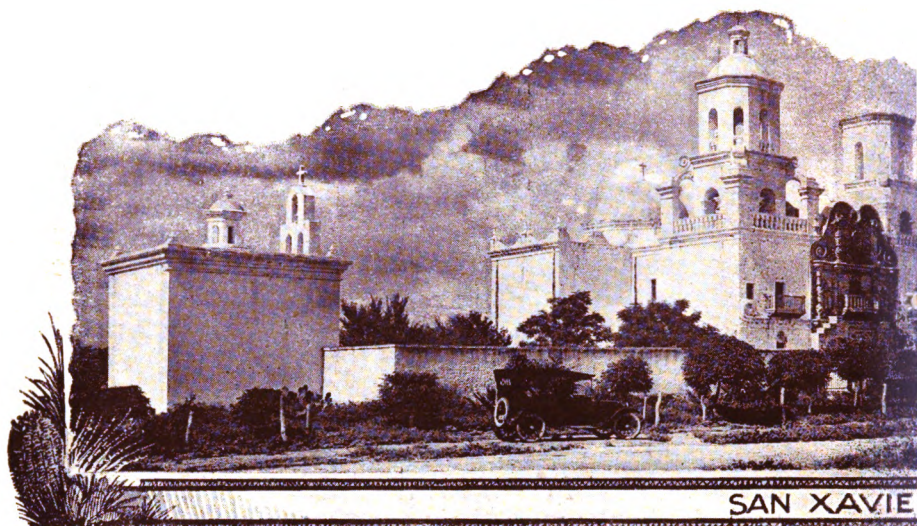
The conditions of life about the Arizona missions were at no time so peaceful and prosperous as those found in California. The Papagos who dwelt in the immediate vicinity of the mission were contented enough, but the Apaches who lived near by were never at peace and even waged war on the other Indians who embraced Christianity.

Such conditions existed up to the early part of the last century when, ultimately, the Spanish Government abandoned the missions. From then on for sixty years the mission stood practically unoccupied, the floors piled high with rubbish and the eaves a haven for bats. Old residents to-day recall how they, as children, cautiously entered the great, dark nave and rummaged about for hidden treasures. Gradually the sacred objects were carried off, such as the silver vessels of the altar, the costly robes of the priests, the old books with their pages of parchment, and some of the bells were taken from the towers. Finally, the Indians of the village removed all remaining valuables from the church to their homes, and cherished them until the Catholic Church again took hold of the mission and began restoration.

It is probable that the true history of San Xavier will never be known. One can only look at the great monument, isolated in the desert, built from the desert sands, and marvel.



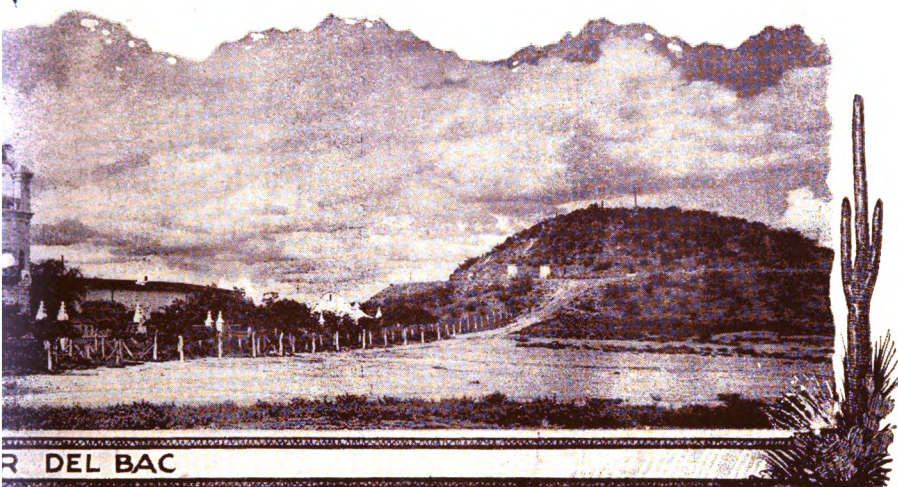
INDIAN DANCE AT SAN XAVIER



The Ornamental Facade of San Xavier



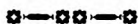
The gable about the entrance of San Xavier is the best example among the missions of that highly ornate decoration which came into Spain with the Renaissance. Mass rather than detail was emphasized, the decoration being confined generally to the entrance, and, to some extent, to the windows, while the walls were left strikingly blank. It has been called Plateresque, or the style of the silversmiths, for it does resemble such work in its feeling of chiselled elaboration. Much has been said for and against this style, but here the workmanship is exquisite and highly graceful. Arabesques in low relief flow over a flat field, and on either side of the entrance rise two vertical and fanciful columns of Moorish influence, the middle ones supporting the broken arch.



R DEL BAC

The decoration for the most part is symbolic. In the center of the pattern the coat-of-arms of the Order of St. Francis of Assisi is conspicuous. It consists of an escutcheon with a white ground on which is displayed a twisted cord (a mark of the Franciscan dress) and a cross on which are nailed one arm of our Savior and one of St. Francis. The arm of the Christ is bare, while that of St. Francis is covered, the meaning to be inferred is the union of the Divine Master and the disciple in charity and in suffering. To the right of the escutcheon is the monogram of Jesus, the Savior of men, and to the left that of the Blessed Virgin. Two ornamental bunches of grapes in the upper decoration signify the land of plenty and two small lions on either side, a symbol used throughout the building, represent the Lions of Castile. Surmounting the broken gable is what remains of a life-size bust of St. Francis of Assisi, but it has long stood an indistinguishable cone of plastered brick with only tradition to name it.

San Jose de Tumacacori



SAN JOSE DEL TUMACACORI

T O - D A Y San Jose stands an impressive ruin about forty-nine miles below Tucson, on the direct route to Mexico. The church was probably founded the same year as San Xavier, 1692, at which time Father Kino made his first extensive trip north. Up to the time of its becoming a mission, the church of Tumacacori was very likely nothing more than a modest adobe room. Whether the present structure was built before or after the completion of San Xavier cannot be answered definitely. One record may be construed to mean that it was finished in the year 1822, but both Professor Byron Cummings of the University of Arizona, and Mr. Henry O. Jaastad, a prominent architect, who have made an extensive study of the two missions, state that certain faults of construction in Tumacacori are carefully avoided in San Xavier, and from this fact they hold that Tumacacori was built, or, at least, begun first.

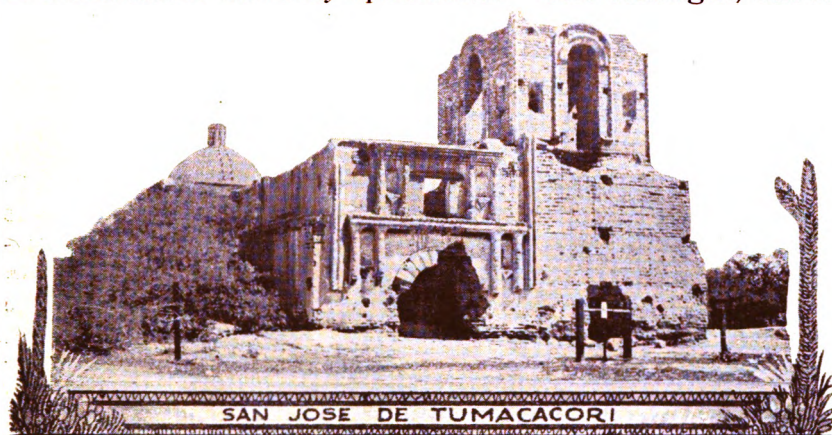
In spite of its faulty and almost primitive construction, Tumacacori holds a high place among missions as an architectural monument.

Its general appearance is good, impressing one with its feeling of solidity and strength, due to the skillful handling of large masses of wall area and unbroken lines. The lower part of the structure is made of sun-baked adobe bricks or rather blocks, supporting to the left of the entrance a square belfry laid up with an excellent, hard-burned brick. The brick above served as a protection for the softer adobe wall beneath. Bancroft found mention made of two brothers by the name of Gaona, master masons, who probably constructed the mission for the padres. Whether these men were connected with the Franciscan Order is not

stated. It is evident, however, that the missions of Tumacacori and San Xavier were not constructed by the same band of workmen, for the niceties of construction of the latter almost equal the blunders of the former.

One can imagine the sunny days at Tumacacori—the Indians working in the fields under the guidance of the padres, the cool shade of the gardens and the sparkling walls of the mission. The atmosphere was more like that about the California missions, a life of repose and contentment rather than one passed in continual dread of Indian attacks, the usual case with Arizona missions.

This idyllic life was of short duration and the beauty of Tumacacori was only ephemeral. One midnight, out of



the blackness of the desert, rose a throng of Indians who beset the mission with savage ferocity. Lighted arrows were shot into the thatched roofs and the doors broken open. Enveloped in flames and desecration, the mission fell without a struggle.

In the belfry, the wooden beams to which the bells were hung, still bear marks of the flames. It has been said that the date of destruction was 1840.

From all accounts, more legends have grown up around Tumacacori than any other mission. This is largely due to its gruesome, nocturnal destruction and also to its having stood for so many years a somber ruin. The

legends usually resolve themselves into two categories, one referring to a subterranean passage and the other to the great wealth taken from the mines by the padres. No passage has ever been discovered and the fabulous mines have been lost.

Possibly, Tumacacori did have an underground passage not unlike the one at San Diego Mission in California. It has probably fallen in, for surely it would have been found long ere this, considering the vast amount of digging done about the mission. For years this digging has been the avocation of a number of zealots who hope to unearth the treasures of the Jesuits, which are supposed to have been buried upon the expulsion of that Order from Spanish lands.

Though the roof of Tumacacori has fallen in, we may surmise that it was laid up in a series of elliptical, segmental domes for the entire length of the nave. The great circular dome rising over the altar is still in good condition but is a rather unaesthetic achievement, although its lantern is beautiful. A noteworthy thing about this dome is that a series of steps, made by projecting bricks on its surface, lead up to the surmounting cross. The only reason for such a construction was that it afforded an easy means for reaching the cross in case repairs were necessary.

In the nave, and especially in the apse and dome, are remains of a decoration which would surpass that of all other missions in refinement of line and subtlety of color. Furthermore, when we pass through the adjoining sacristy into the garden, we find indications there of a well laid-out plan and remains of a luxuriant verdure equaled only by the garden of Santa Barbara Mission in California.

The garden overlooked the great fields which lay to the left of the mission. From the standpoint of an agriculturist, these padres displayed a knowledge of irrigation that is amazing. Surely someone with a knowledge of engineering and drainage laid out the ascequia and canals. Through the middle of the fields ran a small stream, probably one turned from its original course; beside it stands a ruin resembling a mill.

Los Santos Angeles de Guevavi



LOS SANTOS ANGELES DE GUEVAVI

HIS mission was the first to be built in what is now Arizona and is, probably, the only remaining work of the Jesuits. At one time it was the greatest mission in Arizona and Tuma-cacori merely one of its visitas.

All traces of settlements about Guevavi have disappeared and even the location is now seldom given on maps, though it must have been on the old route to Mexico. The mission lies about nine miles north-east of Nogales just above the Mexican border. It was Arizona's first mission, built by the great Father Kino about the year 1692. Until recently the location had been lost or, quite likely, the ruin was not recognized as that of the mission.

The church itself consisted of a long rectangular room, with a circular tower at one corner to the left of the front entrance. Undoubtedly, this tower contained the



LOS SANTOS ANGELES DE GUEVAVI

baptistry, while above, it was utilized as a lookout. After all, this was the primary purpose of the tower. Within the nave a few wall niches remain, probably fourteen originally, signifying the "Stations of the Cross."

As one stands and views the ruins to-day, he can almost read the tragic history of Guevavi. Life at the mission was precarious and its isolation was taken advantage of by every band of marauding Indians who resented the settling of the Spaniards. The soldiery were responsible for a part of this enmity. After a number of intermittent attacks, finally, one mid-day an assault, taking the form almost of a general uprising, was directed against the mission. Mass had just been said in the church when the tumult arose. It seems that many of the mission-Indians had been sulking about for sometime previously and they, too, must have joined in the assault. A gallant resistance was offered, but there could be but little hope in the face of such overwhelming numbers. The mission fell and a massacre of the padres and soldiers followed.

In connection with Guevavi, mention should be made of the missions San Cayetano at Calabazas and Santa Gertrudes at Tubac. There is but little known of San Cayetano, save that it was administered to by the priest at Guevavi, though the church itself was not built until sometime after 1784. Similarly, Tubac is now deserted and all of the buildings have fallen; however, old drawings show the church to have been the ruin which still stands at the extreme end of the plaza. It was at Tubac that the presidio of Spanish soldiers were quartered for the protection of the missions, prior to their removal to Tucson.



San Jose del Tucson

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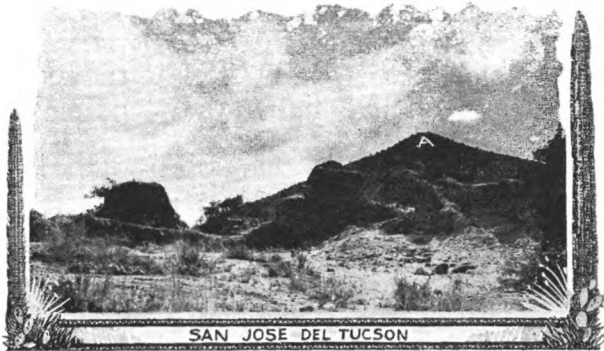
SAN JOSE DEL TUCSON

SINCE the year 1763, Tucson was a visita of Bac. A large number of Indians, some of them converts, had congregated in the fertile valley and the population of the village was, probably, over two hundred families.

In 1776 a mission was built by Fray Garces, resident priest of San Xavier. Old drawings show it to have been a truly great and beautiful monument. It was two stories in height, a condition most extraordinary in mission architecture. On all sides of the second story were large arches; the lower story was plain, with deeply cut doorways, giving dark, contrasting shadows with the blank walls. About the doorways was probably a bit of colorful decoration. No trace of this mission remains today save a low mound of earth.

A pueblo grew up about the mission and, as a means of protection against the Apaches, a wall was built and a presidio of soldiers stationed there, transferred from the village of Tubac. The little community was called "San Augustine del poblito del Tucson."

Seemingly, the mission gradually became known as San Augustine. Many names for that matter have come down in legends as names of the mission of Tucson. Either there were several missions or all of them refer to San Jose.



SAN JOSE DEL TUCSON

Tucson, the Modern City



There is still much of the charm of the old Spanish settlement lingering about Tucson. The Mexican quarter, quaint and romantic, making an interesting contrast with the modern city, has long been the Mecca for artists and writers, striving to put into lasting colors and words the spirit of this historic heritage before it passes away forever.

Tucson has drawn her inhabitants from all parts of the country and the freedom of the West which first led the pioneers to build a permanent town has imbued the later arrivals with this feeling of independence and behooved them also, to build permanently and well. Of the palatial residences, many have caught the spirit of the Spanish-colonial days, with their red tile roofs and white walls glistening in the sunshine. Tucson is the garden-city of the Southwest but above all the home-city, where nearly everyone of the 25,000 inhabitants owns the house in which he lives.

The healthfulness of the climate is too well known to emphasize; long temperate days, full of sunshine, which lure one out of doors, lengthening into cool, serene nights, the incomparable Arizona night with its blue-black sky and flaming stars. The pure desert air, free from the smoke and murk indiginous with other cities, seems to fill one with radiant life and those whom it has helped back to health and happiness are without number.

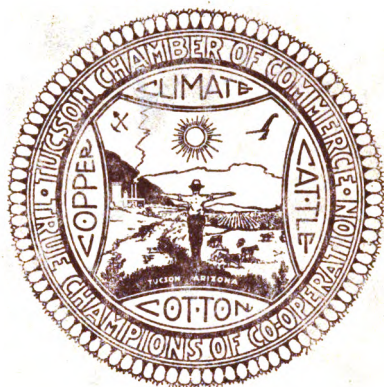
It follows naturally that Tucson is the commercial centre of Arizona as well as the gateway to the west coast of Mexico, situated as it is on the main lines of two railroads and on five highways extending from coast to coast.



STAR JOB PRINT—TUCSON

*"Dream-wrapped in memory's mystic spell,
I rang the rusted Mission bell,
And called to hill and vale and sea
To give their dead again to me—
The brown-robed priests, the altar lights,
The hosts of dark-eyed neophytes."*

From a poem by John McGroarty





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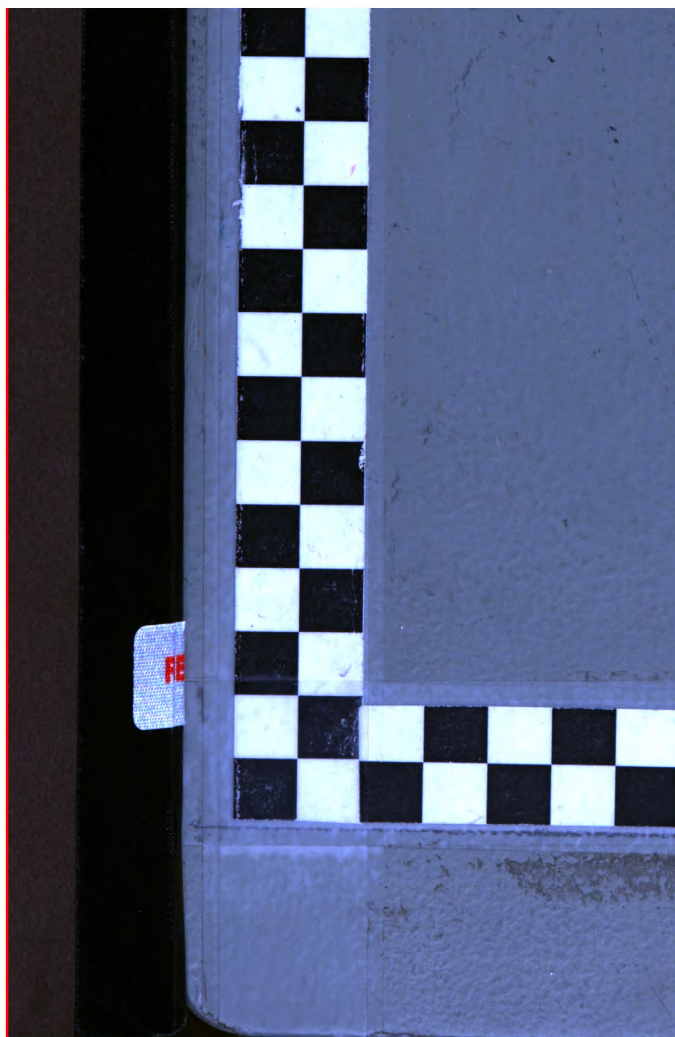


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